Dewey Hunter Theories Essay, Research Paper

John Dewey and Madeline Hunter were both well respected in the field of education and came from different schools of thought. The following presents the different ideas embraced by the two psychologists. In addition, after studying both of their theories, I have formulated my own philosophy which encompasses ideas from both philosophers.

John Dewey was a man who made a dramatic impact on the way curriculum design is viewed today. Dewey was born in Vermont in 1859 and throughout his lifetime he became well known as a philosopher, educator and psychologist. Many of Dewey s ideas evolved from Charles Darwin s theory of evolution and the idea of pragmatism. Pragmatism is the process of utilizing practical approaches to solving problems. Dewey once stated We cannot solve such problems by habitual actions and thoughts. We must use intelligence to overcome obstacles. He felt that science played a big part in the educational development process and viewed science as a method of probing into the behavior of things. From this idea of environmentally-based, active, hands-on learning, he began to develop a theory which became known as the Progressive Education Theory. This was the process of transforming curriculum from rote memorization to active student participation. Dewey believed that students should involve themselves in activities that stimulate their interest, and which create a desire to learn within them. Some of the activities that Dewey embraced as productive exercises were folding, cutting, pricking, measuring, molding, modeling, pattern-making, heating and cooling, and the operations characteristic of such tools as the hammer, saw, file, etc. Outdoor exercises, gardening, cooking, sewing, printing, book-binding, weaving, painting, drawing, singing, dramatization, story-telling, reading and writing are all believed to be socially based activities that stimulate the students need to learn. Dewey emphasized that it is the teacher s responsibility to ensure that the students learn the importance of such activities listed above and not just the manual skills and technical efficiency needed to complete a given task. He also felt that students who involved themselves in these activities should be responsible to define their own limitations because the results of a student involved in an activity that is too complex is not as important as the standards that the student begins to develop about his/her current abilities.

Madeline Hunter, who was also an educator, philosopher and psychologist had a different perspective on the process of educating children. She believed that there are several elements that must be considered in planning for effective instruction. These steps became known as the Madeline Hunter Seven Step Lesson Plan. This lesson plan should begin with feel tone which is the process in which a teacher interacts with the students in an effort to put them at ease within the classroom. This creates a relaxed environment, that Hunter felt, is more suitable for learning. Next, is the anticipatory set which is an introduction to the lesson plan with the idea of grabbing the students attention and getting them excited about the learning to follow. Then the teacher would begin the body of the lesson by utilizing class participation. This is where the teacher provides the information needed to gain the knowledge or skill. The teacher would be interacting with the student and actively involving them in the learning process. Hunter s model than focuses on the importance of checking for understanding which the teacher does directly or indirectly. This ensures that the students have grasped the lesson presented and if they have not, then the teacher will monitor and adjust according to the needs of the students. This is where the teacher will actively observe the students and adjust his/her teaching techniques according to the needs of the students. After the lesson has ended the teacher reviews/redirects and places closure on the lesson. This is where the teacher gives a brief overview of the information covered and redirects the focus of that lesson to the one that will follow. This format is widely accepted amongst educators and has been used as a guideline in schools throughout the world. However, in some schools this format is used as a checklist by supervisor to ensure that the lesson follows Hunter s model exactly. This was never her intention. She provided this format merely to provide a structured plan.

Although there are good and bad aspects of both schools of thought, I have developed a personal philosophy that encompasses what I believe to be the best of both Dewey and Hunter. I have embraced both Dewey s concept of learning that is relevant and meaningful to the student, and Hunter s outline for direct instruction. I believe that more learning is gained by using the seven step lesson plan as a guideline in conjunction with meeting the needs and interest of the students. This allows for the student to become directly involved in what she is learning rather than having it predetermined two years ago by an uninvolved administrator who thinks they know what you need to learn. It is important to understand that all children are individuals and have interests and aspirations that are unique. This is why Dewey s philosophy is important in designing curriculum in today s schools. On the other hand, all children have a commonality in their strive to learn and grow as human beings. Therefore, it is also important that Hunter s model be used as a guideline to educate and facilitate the learning process.